



Here & Now

Vol. 5

An update for Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors and friends

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Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

Gary Burton and I had lunch together the other day at the Commerce Building in Montgomery, Alabama, and Gary reminded me he has been pastor of Pintlala Baptist Church for 41 years. Gary is a great pastor/preacher/administrator/scholar/friend and I was reminded of the men who have spent many, many years in the same pastorate. Gary and I were doing research at the Alabama Archives and it dawned on me that as Gary was studying history he was also making history.

The question may very well be raised as to the longest pastoral terms in the Christian church. I keep an up to date list for our files and here are nine that should get consideration.

Carl McIntire (1906-2002) had the longest pastoral tenure of any preacher I have read about. McIntire was the controversial Presbyterian preacher who served as pastor of Bible Presbyterian Church in Collingswood, New Jersey (1933-1999) for 66 years. That my friends is a record.



Carl McIntire
(1906-2002)

The second longest tenure was William Jay (1769-1853) who served as pastor of the Congregational church in Bath, England (1791-1852) for 61 years.

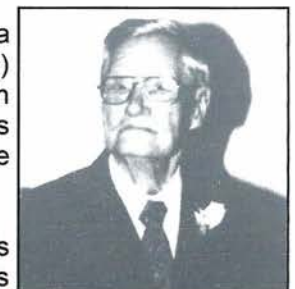


Ben Jones

The third longest tenure that I am aware of was Ludwig Krekler (1875-1955) who served 59 years as pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Gillespie, Illinois, from 1896-1955.

And now it gets real interesting. The fourth longest tenure was the work of a Florida Southern Baptist pastor that I got to know and love. Ben Jones served as pastor of West Park Baptist Church in Jacksonville for 58 years. As far as I know that is the longest pastoral service in the same church of any Southern Baptist preacher.

Now it gets personal. The fifth longest tenure of a pastor is the Carlton Watson Todd (1916-1998) pastorate at Bethel Primitive Baptist Church in Caryville, Florida from 1941-1998. That was 57 years and one month as pastor of the same Florida Baptist church. Bro. Todd and his family have been long time friends and acquaintances of mine.



Carlton Watson Todd
(1916-1998)

The sixth longest pastorate is of great interest because their pastor is frequently in the news. William Shaw was appointed to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom in 2012 and he has served as pastor of White Rock Baptist Church in Philadelphia since 1956. He has served for 57 years and is still serving.

5400 College Drive ~ Graceville, Florida 32440

Telephone: 850-263-3261, Ext. 480 ~ E-mail: fbhspt1@baptistcollege.edu ~ web: floridabaptisthistory.org

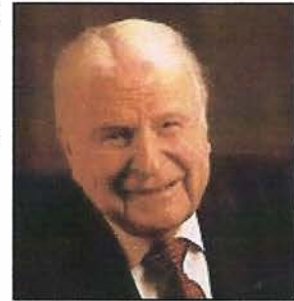


William Shaw

The seventh pastor I would list is T. Lamar Mathis, pastor of Faith Memorial Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, (1941-1995). He served as pastor for 54 years and three months in the same church.

Isaac M. Halderman (1845-1933) served as pastor of First Baptist Church in New York City (1884-1933) for 50 years. He was very influential in the theological battles of the 20th century and never backed down from a fight.

Wally Amos Criswell (1909-2002) served as pastor of First Baptist Dallas for 50 years (1945-1995). Dr. Criswell was a "preachers preacher" and beloved pastor. He was a Texas gentleman and a scholar. Whenever Dr. Criswell spoke at a preaching conference it was hard to find a seat. Preachers loved him and amens would ring out all through the building when he made his emphatic points.



Wally Amos Criswell
(1909-2002)

In this list of preachers Bro. C. W. Todd (1916-1998) is still the most remarkable to me. Bro. Todd served as pastor of three Baptist churches, in three states, at the same time, for an average of 50 years each. He was pastor in Florida, Georgia and Alabama during WWII when he and his family had to ride a Greyhound bus to church. He was still pastor of all three churches when I interviewed him in May, 1996.

When I think of spiritual heroes I think of John Wesley, Hudson Taylor, John Broadus, Albert Schweitzer and Billy Graham. I also think of men like Mathis, Halderman, Todd, and Criswell. These were men who made a gospel impact that affects our belief system today. They stuck by the stuff.

Vini, Vidi, Vici, Velcro. They came, they saw, they conquered and they hung in there.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33